

1857 – Two Opposite Perceptions

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Abstract

This article attempts to look at the two opposite interpretations of the 1857 Revolt – the interpretations projected by the Western and nationalist writers, without subscribing fully to either of them, this article proposes to look into the background and the result of the rebellion of 1857 in an objective manner. The assertion here is not on morality of the events, rather it is held that passing moral judgment may not bring to limelight the actual historical facts. It is argued here that the West, and in this case England, was far ahead of India in material terms with an expanded economy, command over new technology, better arms and ammunition and a superior system of administration. It was simply impossible for India to resist and with stand the British onslaught. The Indian society was not as advanced as some nationalist historians would make us believe; at least it was way behind its opponent. This is what was realised by very few people like Mirza Ghalib and Sir Syed Ahmad Khan, who wished to inculcate among the Indians a rational view of their situation.

Indian historiography is sandwiched between two opposite perceptions i.e the western and the nationalist. The discovery of Indian past was initiated by the western historians and thinkers on scientific lines. Though hailing from advanced civilization their perception of Indian history was not positive from the Indian nationalist point of view. In the chapter on India, in *The Philosophy of History* Hegel says, ‘It is because the Hindoos have no history in the form of transactions (resgestae); that is, no growth expanding into a veritable political condition’¹

In Hegel’s world of history Indians had no place. His strong opinion was repeated by Karl Marx, when he said ‘Indian society has no history at all, at least no known history what we call its history is but the

¹ G.W.F. Hegel, *The Philosophy of History*, New York, 1991, p.163.

history of the successive intruders who founded their empires on the passive basis of that unresisting and unchanging society². The earliest western perception of history was set by James Mill. He did not use softer words for Indians and according to some he was rather rude. The nationalist historians labeled it as imperialist prejudice. There was no dearth of historians adopting this attitude towards Indian and Indian history. Sreedharan quotes the example of Mountstuart Elphinstone who is generally considered to be sympathetic to the Indians, could write passages smacking those in Mill's history, 'The most prominent vice of Hindus, he wrote is want of veracity in which they out do most nations even of the East.'³

In certain cases this attitude of orientalist and the western historian seems to be natural, keeping in view the great civilizational gap between advanced countries of Europe and India. The writers, who promoted the concept of oriental despotism apart from other things, were of the opinion that in oriental societies only the despot was free. They thought the despotic sovereignty of the orient, in India, Persia and China was the expression of the enclosures of the sovereign polity from the villages and from outside.⁴

These views were generally considered to be biased by the nationalist historian. On the contrary the nationalist historians gave an exaggerated account of Indian civilization. In certain cases mythology mingled with history was presented, in their defence, which crossed every line of rationality.

As mentioned by Sreedharan B.G. Tilak a very able Sanskrit, sought to prove from astronomical data that the *Rigveda* was composed in 4000, B.C, while A .C. Das pushed the composition of at least some hymns of the *Rigveda* back to geological epochs.⁵

The above example of two different perceptions, encapsulates all periods of Indian history. The revolt of 1857 is not an exception. It was the willful act of Indian nationalist historiographers who painted the uprising of 1857 as Indian War of Independence, full of patriotic passion engulfing the whole of India. All these attempts were made to re-enthroned the figure head sitting in Red Fort of Delhi, whose authority

² Karl Marx, *The First Indian War of Independence, 1857-1859*, Moscow, 1968, pp.30-31.

³ R.C. Majumdar, Nationalist Historians, in Philips (ed.), *Historians of India Pakistan and Ceylon*, London, 1977.

⁴ Lawrence Krader, *The Asiatic Mode of Production*, Netherland, 1975, p.75.

⁵ E. Sreedharan, *A Text Book of Historiography, 500 BC to AD 2000*, New Delhi, 2004, p.430.

was not even fully enforced in the four walls of the Red Fort. Indian nationalist historiography engaged in an eager search for national identity by meeting European charges against Indian life and culture, at times betrayed a complete lack of historical propriety.⁶

Encircled in two different perceptions of Indian historiography, it would be easier to compare state of affairs in the British empire and India in the middle of 19th century when uprising of 1857 overtook various parts of India. Keeping apart nationalistic aspirations and will to throw the yoke of the British colonialism, there was a great developmental and civilizational gap between the two countries. India under colonialism lagged behind the British power on the developmental graph. Around 1857 the Mughal governors in various provinces were only paying lip service to the crown of Delhi. Marhatas were on the rampage and then Afghanis shattered Marhatas power by ransacking their power strongholds. The Mughal king was in a desolate position. Pannikar says,

It is the military conquest of India which though completed only in 1858, had given to the British an unshakeable foundation by 1818, that enabled the industrially revolutionized Britain in the post Napoleonic period to project her political and economic power into the pacific.⁷

British imperial dominance

At that time, Britain ruled over large tracts of land in the four continents. Whole of South Asia, including Ceylon, Burma were under her subjugation. Besides this Australia, Canada and many states of Caribbean, Latin America and Africa were her colonies, yet what ever the rhetoric of anti-imperialism within Britain, the fact was that the empire continued to grow expanding according to one calculation at an average annual pace of about 100,000 square miles between 1815 and 1865.⁸ This expansion has been summarized by Kennedy in these words:

Among these some where strategical /commercial acquisition like Singapore, Aden the Falkland Island, Hong Kong, Lagos others were the consequences of land hungry White settlers, moving across the South African *veldt*, the Canadian prairies and the Australian outback-whose expansion usually provoked a

⁶ *Ibid.*, p.433.

⁷ K.M. Pannikar, *Asia and Western Dominance*, London, 1953.

⁸ A.G.L. Shaw, (ed.), *Great Britain and the Colonies (1815-1865)*, London, 1970, p.2.

native resistance that often had to be suppressed by troops from Britain or British India.⁹

It is a fact that after industrial revolution Britain established itself as a hegemonic power. A comparative study of figures related to development in this era reveals that Britain was leading other European powers taking into consideration various indices. Between 1850 and 1873 the industrial growth and progress was unprecedented. Britain was generally called workshop of the world. There were great strides in the production of coal, textile, shipbuilding, Iron and steel. In 1851 between months of May and October an industrial exhibition of all nations was held in Hyde Park London to prove that Britain was leading the industrial world. The following figures show the increase in the numbers of industrial workers:¹⁰

Product / workers	1851	1871
Coalminers	193111	315398
Iron and Steel	95350	191291
Cotton	414998	508715
Engineering & Shipbuilding	80528	172948

The increase in the industrial workers was due to migration from rural areas to industrial towns, which also negatively effected the number of agricultural workers which during this period, fell from 1904687 to 1423854 in England. Before examining the progress in other socio-political sectors, it seems pertinent to divert our attention to a comparative study of the economic indicators with other European nations and the West. Kennedy highlights these achievements as following:

Between 1760 and 1830, the United Kingdom was responsible for around 'two-third of Europe's industrial growth of output', and its share of world manufacturing production leaped from 1.9 to 9.5 per cent; in the next thirty years, British industrial expansion pushed that figure to 19.9 percent, despite the spread of the new technology to other countries in the West. Around 1860, which was probably when the country reached its zenith in relative terms, the United Kingdom produced 53 per cent of the world's iron and 50 per cent of its coal and lignite, and consumed just under half of the raw cotton output of the globe.

⁹ Paul Kennedy, *The Rise and Fall of the Great Powers*, London, 1989, p.199.

¹⁰ David Taylor, *Mastering Economic and Social History*, London, 1989, p.421.

With 2 per cent of the world's population and 10 per cent of Europe's, the United Kingdom would seem to have a capacity in modern industries equal to 40-45 per cent of the world's potential and 55-60 per cent of that in Europe. Its energy consumption from modern sources (coal, lignite, oil) in 1860 was five times that of either the United States or Prussia/Germany, six times that of France, and 155 times that of Russia! It alone was responsible for one-fifth of the world's commerce, but for two-fifth of the trade in manufactured goods. Over one-third of the world's merchants marine flew under the British flag, and that share was steadily increasing. It was no surprise that the mid- Victorians exulted at their unique state being now (as the economist Jevons put it in 1865) the trading centre of the universe.¹¹

Most of the critics, while accepting this amazing industrial development, see it as a consequence of exploitation of the resources of her colonies. It can not be denied and there is a lot of substance of truth in it. In the year 1750 the relative share of world manufacturing output of Europe was 23.2%. United Kingdom share was only 1.9 % of it, while India/Pakistan had major share of 24.5 %, lagging behind China only, who captured 32.8 % share. But in 1860 Britain got 19.9 % of it and India and Pakistan jointly came down to 8.6 % while in 1880 it further declined to 2.8 %. While basking in glory, Kennedy was proud to mention:

The plains of north America and Russia are our corn fields; Chicago and Odessa our granaries; Canada and the Baltic are our timber forests; Australasia contains our sheep farms, and in Argentina and on the western prairies of North America are our herds of oxen; Peru sends her silver, and gold of South Africa and Australia flows to London; the Hindus and the Chinese grow tea for us, and our coffee, sugar and spice plantations are in the Indies. Spain and France are our cotton grounds, which for long have occupied the Southern United States, are now being extended everywhere in the warm regions of the earth.¹²

Cotton industry was growing fast though after devastating Indian cotton industry and a well planned road map to turn Indian import into exports. Engles gives a complete picture of this development:

Meanwhile, let us trace the development of English manufacture somewhat more minutely, beginning with the cotton industry. In

¹¹ *Ibid.*, 193-94.

¹² R. Hyam, *Britain Imperial Century 1815-1914*, London, 1975, p.47.

the years 1771-1775, there were annually imported into England rather less than 5,000,000 pounds of raw cotton; in the year 1841 there were imported 528,000,000 pounds, and the import for 1844 will reach at least 600,000,000 pounds. In 1834 England exported 556,000,000 yards of woven cotton goods, 76,500,000 pounds of cotton yarn, and cotton hosiery of the value of 1,200,000. In the same year over 8,000,000 mule spindles were at work, 110,000 power and 250,000 hand-looms, throstle spindles not included, in the service of the cotton industry: and according to MacCulloch's reckoning, nearly a million and a half human being were supported by this branch, of whom but 220,000 worked in the mills; the power used in these mills was steam, equivalent to 33,000 horse- power, and water, equivalent to 11,000 horse power. At present these figures are far from adequate, and it may be safely assumed that, in the year 1845, the power and number of the machines and the number of the workers is greater by one-half than it was in 1834. The chief centre of this industry is Lancashire, where it originated; it has thoroughly revolutionized this country, converting it from an obscure, ill-cultivated swamp into a busy, lively region, multiplying its population tenfold in eighty years and causing giant cities such as Liverpool and Manchester, containing together 700,000 inhabitants, and their neighboring towns, Bolton with 60,000, Rochdale with 75,000, Oldham with 50,000, Preston with 60,000, Ashton and Stalybridge with 40,000 and a whole list of other manufacturing towns to spring up as if by a magic touch.¹³

There are instances in history where sudden economic development does not create equally matching socio-political structures. Though Britain was being industrialized rapidly, but still many socio-political institutions were smacking of feudalism. New industrial town were flourishing, but they had little say in political decision making. Between 1801 and 1831 growth of population in the following town is worthy of observation.¹⁴

Inhabitants:

Town	(1801)	(1831)
Bradford	29,000	77,0000
Halifax	63,000	110,000
Huddersfield	15,000	34,000

¹³ Marx, Engles, *On Britain*, Moscow, 1962, pp.41-3.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, p.43.

Leeds	53,000	123,000
Total	564,000	980,000.

British parliament was controlled by old aristocracy representing the agrarian areas; most of the industrial towns like those mentioned above, were still out of the ambit of franchise. In 1815 only 3% of total population was eligible for voting. Craftsmen and workers were totally marginalized on this account. Industrial towns like Manchester, Leeds, Sheffield and Bradford had not a single representative in the parliament, while southern agrarian areas had 50% representative in the House of Commons.

Like today's Pakistan, elections were a farce. Votes were bought and sold on the open market; a voter sold his vote to the candidate bidding the highest amount of money. As voting was not carried out by a secret ballot, candidate could check that voters had kept to their word. Sometimes voter were threatened by physical violence, as described by Taylor.¹⁵

The big landowner enjoyed great wealth, by dominating House of Commons and the Council of King, controlled foreign policy, served as lord's lieutenant of the countries in charge of local militia and nominated large retinues of relations and dependants to places in the Commons, church, the army and indeed all public services.

This situation demanded a major change in the political structure to move towards more democratic order. There was a general feeling for introducing parliamentary reforms. The essence of the movement for parliamentary reforms in the first generation of 19th century was the claim of new form of wealth- manufacturing and commercial to assert their place along side landed property as the basis of social prestige and political power. These new forces of change were fighting and pushing forward for early reforms. They were able to succeed in 1832 though the first reform bill, but still universal suffrage was far away which was finally attained, a century later, in 1928.

The democratic movement was further led towards success by Chartist movement. The people's Charter put forth in 1938 included six points. It demanded a vote for every man, and in order that every vote should be at the same value, equal electoral districts.

After reforms bill of 1832 many pro-people laws were enacted in the parliament and poor law of 1834 was one of them to give relief to the poors and destitute. This act thus ensured that poor law would be efficiently administered by professionals rather than by indifferent amateur.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, p.224.

It was a utilitarian act influenced by ideas of Bentham. In 18th Century and early decades of 19th century state played no part in imparting education to the people of United Kingdom. Most of the older universities were upgraded monasteries and curriculum was religion oriented. The secularists and the state gradually became involved in education, and due to industrialization mechanics institutes were opened. Non conformists and secularists, excluded from Oxford and Cambridge, had drawn together to found an undenominational teaching centres in the capital, on the basis of keeping theology out of the curriculum and 'having no religious test for teachers and taught.'¹⁶

Laws were made to make arrangements for the children of workers to go to schools. In the second and third decade of 19th century many steps were taken towards laying the basis for modern education. The founding of London University in 1827 was, therefore an educational event of the first importance.

Due to industrialization, working class movement was springing from industrial towns. The workers were uniting to form organizations to protect there rights in the early 19th century, but no considerable progress could be made until the repeal of the combination Acts (1824-1825) which legalized trade unions. Big national unions were founded such as potters in 1831, and the builders in 1831 or 1832- with a determination to rally the whole trade in a drive for better conditions. The Grand National Consolidated Trade Union was founded in 1833 with the object of uniting the working class for a short and in Owen's view a peaceful struggle which he expected would inaugurate the millennium within a few months.¹⁷

The Chartist and Owenites further consolidated there endeavors with the publication of Communist Manifesto in 1848 and formation Working Men's International Organization, the labour movements were shaping on scientific lines. The source of this widening horizon was the British Trade Union Movement which paved way for adult franchise in Britain. 'The Union began to meet together in an annual Trade Union congress in 1868. The election of 1874 brought to the House of Commons the first working class MPs, Thomas Burt and Alexander Macdonald, who were miners. Both were elected as Liberals'.¹⁸No doubt it was a great achievement. In the history of civilization, it was an

¹⁶ G.M. Trevelyan, *English Social History*, 1982, p.493.

¹⁷ G.D.H. Cole and Aw Filson, *British working class movements, selected documents, 1789-1875*. N.Y 1965 pp.241-42.

¹⁸ T.L. Jarman, *Socialism in Britain, From the Industrial Revolution to the present Day*, N.Y. 1972, p.80.

important step towards human rights and equality and two major nations of Europe i.e. France and Britain were the pioneers by making progress towards this direction.

The socio-political development in 19th century Britain also gave birth to literary figures of great significance who produced the best poetry and fiction of that era. One of the greatest of English novelist Charles Dickens was a product of that era. his novels *David Copperfield* (1849-50), *A Tale of Two Cities* (1859) and *Great Expectations* (1860-1) were produced in the middle of 19th century. Almost all the writers of the Victorian age show in their creative activity a keen awareness of their social environment and many of them came forward as social critic.

Bronte sisters, Thackeray, Tennyson Mathew Arnold and John Ruskin also gave various shades of Victorian life in contrast to each other. The nationalist historian may raise the question that this overall development of Britain was reeking with worst type of colonial exploitations and punctuated with brutalities in foreign lands but as Marx said ‘The question is, can mankind fulfill its destiny without a fundamental revolution in the social state of Asia? If not, what ever may have been the crimes of England she was the unconscious tool of history in bringing about that revolution’

Then what ever bitterness the spectacle of the crumbling of an ancient world may have for our personal feelings we have the right, in point of history to exclaim with Goethe:

Should this torture then torment us since it brings us greater pleasure?

*Were not through the rule of Timur souls devoured without measure*¹⁹

The whole history of mankind is full of such incidents where strong developed and powerful nations have trampled the weaker nations without opening a lesson on morality in the book of ethics. History does not make moral decisions from ‘Illiad’ of Homer to Thucydides. The history of the Peloponnesian war, and from Aryan invasion around 1500 BC to Mohammad Bin Qasim and battle of Plassey in 1757, history is replete with sequential evidence that there is a reason behind the subjugation of weaker nations by the strong ones.

The power of civilizational superiority reflected into Greeks, Roman, Arabs, Dutch, Portuguese and British expansionism and colonialism bears testimony to that historical reality. Mongols and Turks hordes followed suit. In India all kings, rulers and dynasty’s who fell were inferiors one way or the other from those who subjugated them.

¹⁹ Karl Marx and F. Engels, Selected Works Vol I Moscow, 1973, p.493.

Indian economy during 19th century:

In the middle of 18th century India had a large economic base. Its share of world manufacturing output was 24.5 % which was second in the world after China with 32.8% of the share. But by 1860's it dropped to 8.6 % while United Kingdom's share increased from 1.9 % in 1750 to 19.9 % in 1860. Britain made it possible after controlling larger parts of the world as her colonies, as mentioned earlier.

In the 16th- 18th century's domestic industry was represented in India mainly by hand spinning and weaving. The production of vegetable oil and animal fats, sugar of sugar cane and plain juice, the cleansing of rice, the weaving of mats and baskets of palm fibre and by other kinds of non-agricultural labor carried on by peasants.²⁰

It is not easy to present the state of economy of 19th century India in totality, because it was not monolithic like economy of a modern nation state today. Even the *Cambridge History of India* presents regional economic picture. There is no denying the fact that before the intrusion of the British in Indian economy there were strong centers of cloth production and Indian export to Europe was bigger than the imports. Gradually East India Company manipulated to dislodge the weavers and the production replacing it with imports from Britain.

The process of political disintegration in India started a hundred years earlier than the period under discussion. By the middle years of the eighteen century the empire lay in ruins, its once vast possessions reduced to roughly a rectangular wedge of territory about 250 miles from north to south and 100 miles broad.²¹

The governors were becoming independent one after the other. Marhathas were becoming powerful along with the advances of the East India Company, gradually squeezing the territorial sovereignty of the Mughals. As mentioned by Dalrymple, after the death of Shah Alam II the authority of the Mughals had contracted further. Bahadur Shah Zafar's real authority existed within the walls of the Red Fort, as if he were an Indian pope within his own Vatican city.²² This situation badly effected the domestic economy. Destabilization changed the mood of economy. Earlier the cotton industry along with its other structures was paralyzed by the British interference. The wealth from Bengal after the battle of Plassey went to England chiefly in the form of bullion. According to an estimate the drain of Indian treasure was from five

²⁰ A.I. Chicherov, *India Economic Development in the 16th 18th Centuries*, Lahore, pp.19-20.

²¹ Percival Spear, *Twilight of the Mughals*, Cambridge, 1951, p.5.

²² William Dalrymple, *The Last Mughal*, London, 2006, p.37.

hundred to one thousand million pounds to England between Plassey and Waterloo.

With the disintegration of traditional ruling classes the demand of luxury goods steadily declined. 'This was accompanied by decline in the role of towns. Political turbulence started in many Indian states, both independent and dependent.'²³ All the craftsmen engaged in the production of luxury goods become jobless; it not only effected the manufacturing sector but also created mass unemployment.

Before discussing industrial development in India in early and mid 19th century let us look at the national income. In this regard findings of Digby are often quoted. He says that per capita income of India in 1850 was 2 d. The claim of Digby was challenged by Curzon's front man F.T Atkinson who had claimed that per capita income in 1880 and 1900 had risen. It is said that Curzon's claim prevailed in a meeting of the Royal Statistical Society.²⁴

Later on another reasonable attempt was made by Crawford in 1830 by comparing the earning of a rural laborer, and he concluded that while wages of rural labour in India were Rs 15 to 20 per year, necessities cost one third as much in India. So their wages in term of necessities would be Rs 45-60 or in England £ 4.10 to £ 6 a year which was still less than England.²⁵

In his remarkable contribution to the study of Indian national income Naoroji was also interested in comparing the per capita income in India and England, But with a particular concern for demonstrating the higher burden of taxation in India. Naoroji placed per capita of India at Rs 30 in about 1870 compared to Rs 450 of England.²⁶

Industry:

The most critical question which is under debate is that whether India was passing through pre-capitalist stage of development before the British intervention in the economy of India. Most of the nationalists and left wing historians reiterate that India was at the pre-capitalist stage of development before they took the reign in their hands. Another view, which is totally opposite to this, is that India was marred by oriental

²³ C.A. Bayly, *Rulers, Towns, Men and Bazars* (1770-1870), Oxford, 2002, p.265.

²⁴ W. Digby, *Prosperous, British India*, a revelation from official Records, London, 1901, p.534.

²⁵ K.M. Chaudhari, *The Economic Development of India under the East India Company, 1814-1858*, Cambridge, 1971, p.228.

²⁶ Dharma Kumar, *The Cambridge Economic History of India Vol II, 1757-2003*, Delhi, 2005, p.377.

despotism and that her development was nowhere near pre-capitalist stage. Romesh Chander Dutt and Rajani Prasad Dutt were both critical about the British attitude towards Indian economy and extortion of Indian wealth. Nehru also said that the British deliberately held back Indian development.

Despite these contrasting opinions it is a fact that India started late in the race of modern industrialization mainly due to primitive means of production and infrastructure. The first Indian Jute Spinning Mill was established near Serampore in 1855 by two Scots and an Indian. The first power loom began to operate in 1859.²⁷ On the other hand in England power looms started working a century earlier, by 1779. Factories were established with several thousands spindles and more than 300 workmen. India had its first cotton mill in Calcutta in 1818 and a Parsee enterprise established a cotton mill in Bombay in 1854.

Pioneer attempts to introduce modern methods for the manufacture of pig-iron and steel were made as early as 1830 in South Arcot district. They were all destined to failure until the Barakar Iron Works which was acquired in 1889 by the Bengal Steel and Iron Company were started in 1874 in Bengal on Jherria coal fields.

The most important step in this direction was by the formation of the Tata Company, but it was in early 20th century. The company was established in Sakchi in the Singhbhum district by J.N. Tata in 1907. Pig iron was produced in December 1911 and steel for the first time in India in 1913.²⁸

These new industrial ventures were introduced when cottage industry was already there, but it was losing its market rapidly and craftsmen were becoming jobless gradually. The decay had already started.

Concepts and Education: Both in Hindu and Muslim thoughts, rationalism and conservatism ran parallel to each other. In the Muslims there was not much appeal for the modern thought. Conservatives and traditionalists always prevailed and modernists were marginalized. The conservatives insisted upon strict conformity to the literal meaning of the sacred texts and unquestioning obedience to religious injunctions based upon revelation.²⁹

²⁷ M.E. Chamberlain, *British and India: The Interaction of Two Peoples*, Devon, 1974, p.131.

²⁸ G.B. Jathar, S.G. Beri, *Indian Economics*, London OUP 1949, pp.21-36.

²⁹ Tara Chand, *History of the Freedom Movement In India*, Lahore, p.173.

The rationalist wanted to translate the religious thoughts through reason and their aim was to interpret in modern diction. In the Abbasid period this antagonistic approaches were reflected in the thoughts of Asharites (the traditionalist) and Mutazalites (The rationalist).

In India Shaikh Ahmad Sarhindi (1563-1624) stood for the traditionalist school while Shah Waliullah (1703-1763) represented the rationalist school. Shah Waliullah was succeeded by Mirza Ghalib, Sir Syed Ahmad Khan and Hali. The modernists were trying hard to impart western education to the Muslim youth and make a dent in madrasas educational system.

In the last days of the Mughals Delhi had six famous madrasas and at least four smaller ones, nine newspapers in Urdu and Persian, five intellectual journals published, innumerable printing presses and publishers and no fewer than 130 yunani doctors.³⁰

Madrasas students also enjoyed the facility of Madrasa-i-Rahimiyya in the suburbs of Delhi. Though some of the European observed that education given in Delhi was remarkable as told by William Sleeman:

He who holds an office worth twenty rupees a month commonly gives his sons an education equal to that of a prime minister. They learn, through the medium of Arabic and Persian languages, what young men in our colleges learn through those of Greek and Latin that is grammar, rhetoric, and logic. After his seven years of study, the young Muhammadan binds his turban upon a head almost as well filled with the things which appertain to these branches of knowledge as the young man raw from Oxford, he will talk as fluently about Socrates and Aristotle, Plato and Hippocrates, Galen and Avicenna; (alias sokrat, Aristotalis, Aflatun, Bokrat, Jalinus) in languages in which he has leant what he knows are those which he most requires through life.³¹

The powerless King Bahadur Shah Zafar sunk in decadence and unaware of crumbling system was more interested in inducting young wives to his haram surrounded by courtesans. He spent his time in frivolous activities of kite flying and settling the score with salatin.

³⁰ Margrit Pernau, *Middle class and Secularization: The Muslim of Delhi in the 19th Century*, in Intiz Ahmad, Helmut Reifeld (ed.), *Middle Class Values in India and Western Europe*, New Delhi, 2003, pp.21- 42.

³¹ W.H. Sleeman, *Rambles and Recollections of an Indian official*, Oxford 1915, pp.523-24.

Actually at the time of revolt he was caught between the devil and the deep sea, trying to submit to the British and pleasing the rebels.

The old Indian society was crumbling, its stagnation was eating it up. Marx rightly exposed its rottenness:

We must not forget the barbarian egotism which, concentrating on some miserable patch of land, had quietly witnessed the ruin of empires, the perpetration of unspeakable cruelties, the massacre of the population of large towns, with no other consideration bestowed upon them than on natural events, itself the helpless prey of any aggressor who deigned to notice it at all. We must not forget that this magnified, stagnatory, and vegetative life, that this passive sort of existence evoked on the other part, in contradistinction, wild, aimless, unbounded forces of destruction and rendered murder itself a religious rite in Hindustan. We must not forget that these little communities were contaminated by distinctions of caste and by slavery, that they subjugated man to external circumstances instead of elevating man to be the sovereign of circumstances, that they transformed a self-developing social state into never changing natural destiny, and thus brought about a brutalizing worship of nature, exhibiting its degradation in the fact that man, the sovereign of nature, fell down on his knees in adoration of Hanuman, the monkey, and Sabbala, the cow.³²

Concluding it one can easily observe that there was a great civilizational gap between Indian culture and highest stage of industrial progress in Britain and springing of a new culture from it. Britain was coming out of all vestiges of feudalism, while India was still gripped with Mughal despotism under the yoke of British imperialism. Modern industry was hardly seen in India and stage of pre-capitalist development was far away. One can not see a glimpse of it in N.W.F.P and Balochistan and South eastern part of Sindh and southern deserts of Punjab. New modern educational institutions and universities were established in India after 1857. Legislative system and courts were introduced by the British when the local citizens of India were still at the mercy of local influential people who had the prerogative of announcing verdict of their own choice.

The local armies in independent states had no match with modern expertise of the British army. Comparing with the British army it looked like a crowd. The few sane voices in that era like Mirza Ghalib

³² K. Marx and F. Engels, *The First Indian War of Independence 1857-1859* Moscow, 1968, pp.19-20.

and Sir Syed Ahmed Khan, were trying to steer people around towards enlightenment. It was so tragic that, according to my knowledge first introductory book in Urdu about modern Western philosophy was written by Shams-ul-ulma Nawab Syed Imam Asar in 1877, before that know-how about philosophy was contained in classical Persian and Arabic books.

Lastly Mirza Ghalib made comparison of the British and Indian society in these words:

They have produced and brought here such constitution and laws that were unseen and unheard of. Men of arts have overshadowed their ancestors. To follow the constitution the privilege of this nation. No one better than they knows how to administer the country. They have amalgamated justice with wisdom and made India a land of law hundred fold. People extract spark from pieces of stone but the British are such clever craftsmen who create fire from straw (matchsticks). They have put water under spell so that smoke drives the boat on it. Steam sometimes takes ships to the sea and sometimes brings things from high to the ground. The power of steam adds speed to the ships so that waves of wind and water become helpless. They bestow on words that flight of birds. Haven't you seen how this wise group transmits messages in a moment as far as 200 miles? They ignite the air (gas) in such a way that it burns like coalfire. Look at the business acumen of these clever people and see in one constitution the work of hundreds of constitutions. Beside their constitution, other constitutions look like old almanacs. O! My wise friend! Are there such fine things in your constitution? Worship of the dead is not a good pastime don't you see that your constitution is sheer verbosity'.³³

³³ Sibte Hasan, *The Battle of Ideas in Pakistan* Karachi, 1986, pp.155-56.